CHANDRASEKHAR RAO
Life and Work

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The Working Artists Association of Orissa, Bhubaneswar publishes monographs on individual artists to focus on their contributions to the Indian Contemporary Art. The present monograph is the fourth in the series. Three earlier ones are on Dinanath Pathy (copies exhausted), Sarat Chandra Debo and Siba Panigrahi.

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CONTEMPORARY ORISSAN ARTISTS SERIES-FOUR

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Dinanath Pathy
Pradosh Mishra

WORKING ARTISTS ASSOCIATION OF ORISSA
BHUBANESWAR

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Released on the occasion of the 60th Birth Anniversary of the Artist

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First Edition, September 2000
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Design and Production Supervision
Dillip Kumar Tripathy

Jacket : Potter

Published by
D.N. Rao
General Secretary
Working Artists Association
EB-575, Badagada Brit Colony
Bhubaneswar - 751018

Printed at
Reliance Offset (P) Ltd.
B:186, Okhla Industrial Area Phase-I,
New Delhi - 110 020

Price : Rs. 100

This monograph has been prepared at Alice Boner Institute, Varanasi

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Village Deity, 61×152 cm

Decoding Chandrasekhar's Life and Paintings at Sixty

In a hierarchical order of a semi-urban society with dogmas of prescribed thinking, is sixty a magical number which calls for initial coding the long, loose accumulation of perceptual experiences interwoven with facts of life eventually to decode them to find them cast-in structured art sensibilities The question with high interrogative potentials answers more questions of varying subjectivity.

Last June, the joint announcement of the first results of public and private projects on sequencing the human genome has raised a host of scientific economic, social and ethical questions. These questions related to decoding of human existence don't reflect the problems of aesthetics which otherwise is being dealt by a great many artists of all periods and nationalities beginning with Pablo Picasso to Narlanka Chandrasekhar. In fact, decoding or in the popular art term, deconstruction of human figures, dehumanizing them, demystifying them or divining them (body and beyond) leads to a search for personal identity, for a kind of genetic substance in the vast sea of world images. Decoding commonly understood as leading to accessing the secrets, has a parallel meaning in the areas of creative arts with the artist's search for his access into a language area for personal codes. These codes for an artist function as *kalam*, style or signature. These signatures are DNAs of genetic art structuring the substance of artistic personality. Unlike signatures these personal.art codes keep on changing to keep pace with the challenges of the new aesthetics.

When an artist grows old or for example completes sixty years of age, with the start of the decaying of human bio-substance, the gains of an artistic search crystallizes on a social scale and raises above the

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survival level prompting for a decoding reversal search into his life and arts. This leads to the attainment of self-knowledge and understanding of the body and the soul, the very basics of an art search. The search, or the self enquiry which was outwardly imposed on a canvas, colour, clay, stone, metal and other material 'objects' finally changes track inward and is fed on harmony, balance, beauty, vision and expression. Here lay the success of an artist's journey in decoding the body to find out the soul – the creative arts.

Chandrasekhar has precisely been engaged in the bio-soul art business of survival and decoding for more than three decades in a land climatically hostile for such unpaid or under-paid research with a personal, non-aggressive and shy disposition. His earlier obsession with 'body–beautiful' lands him under the magic siege of revivalism. The preachers of this pseudo-nationalistic–oriental non Orissan art style were Bimbadhar Varma and Gourang Charan Som outside Khallikote and Rabi Narayan Nayak in the school and definitely not Ajit Keshari Ray of whom he was then direct student in the Indian Painting Department. The preachers of revivalism had little realized that the movement was out of the stream then and put to disuse in the land of its origin, Santiniketan. The magicalities of revivalism of the kind practised in Khallikote and Orissa had a captivating audience and the practitioners had self-obsession to a degree of blurring their vision to the need of time refusing changes that ultimately proved detrimental to their perceptual understanding and growth. My intention is not to undermine the contribution of revivalist movement, in the growth of modernism in the country but to contextualize its implementation on the Orissan soil already having a great art tradition and to assert

Village Life, 60×90 cm

that was not justified. Their insulated outlook without being open minded and responsive to the newly emerging European revolutionary movements, proved determinate. This was the first phase of revivalism in Orissa.

I had made a tempera painting on the theme of South Indian Bull dance in 1962, with the help of Chandrasekhar using colours from his palette; nobody, neither Chandrasekhar nor I had the slightest idea that

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revivalism in Orissa. I confess, inspired by Chandrasekhar's friendship than by his paintings, I had done a few wash paintings, and temperas that I can remember by titles and count them on my fingertips. One of my wash paintings titled Dream when showed to Sarat Chandra Debo, the Principal of Khallikote Art School to elicit his appreciation; his instant question to us was how the person could sleep in a room without windows for ventilation? He almost snatched the painting from us, dipped it into his bathtub and rubbed a portion out with his little finger nails and opened the window in the person's sleeping room. We were hesitant to allow such bruise and returned dejected to our rooms. Then only my friend told me that wash paintings are not done the way the principal did. The intention of mentioning this personal episode is to hint up on two major styles of treatment or process for executing wash paintings. While the Santiniketan School would never allow a perspective drawing to mar the mystical quality, the other style patronized by Sarat Chandra Debo had a different approach. Chandrasekhar had a similar experience with Sarat Chandra when he also gave such a twist to his painting *Prasadhana.*

Chandrasekhar knew it well like his other friends and teachers, how best a wash painting had to be done with subdued colour tonalities laid out as layers of mist all around the paper leaving somewhere in the middle a haze, which they would call a focus to let the subject/intention peep out in different mood - sombre, melancholy or romantic. These wash paintings are extremely dreamy and far away from real situations. I remember one of the washes of Chandrasekhar's on a theme of *Lakshmi Purana, the Banishment of Lakshmi.* Lord Jagannath sits on his throne, his head bent in shame and dejection, drives away Lakshmi from his presence pointing out his outstretched hand at Lakshmi while Balabhadra stands still completely fazed not comprehending what was happening.

Chandrasekhar's first recognition came for his tempera painting *Meera Drinking Poison* in the first All Orissa Fine Art Exhibition organized by Orissa Lalit Kala Akademi in Bhubaneswar in 1961. Chandrasekhar, though a revivalist, was painting in a different style. His figures were a little elongated and mostly melancholic. In this kind of twist there was the psychological affiliation with Sarat Chandra Debo's style, not in its totality but in the casual borrowing from the disposition of his figurative work.

The revivalists had been divided into two groups – the outer hostel Cuttaki style and inner hostel Ganjami style. These labels for styles may sound parochial in an art world but there one has to bear with. The others, who were with Chandrasekhar doing the inner hostel style were Lakshmi Narayan Sahoo and Devaraj Sahoo. They always wanted to rope me in since I was an admirer of Principal Sarat Chandra. But I was flamboyant and expressionistic and finally did not toe their line. My last tempera executed in Chandrasekhar's company *Sita Svayambhara* is now in the Shivabala Yogi Ashram, Dehradun. In those days Khallikote was beaming with groups fighting for various privileges and for the shifting of the institution to Bhubaneswar. Besides an occasional outbursts of youthful valor and childish mischief, they were vying for professional competency in art, which was quite healthy. I remember in Lakshmi Narayan Sahoo would make a survey and analysis of paintings done the previous days on his way to the morning toilet, passing by the rooms of inner hostel into the forest to ease

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by the rooms of inner hostel into the forest to ease himself . In the evening, a few of the inner hostellers would join with Lakshmi Narayan to pay a friendly visit to the outer hostel to look for wash and temperas for a stylistic comparison. After returning from the evening stroll covering Khallikote market, there would ensue a fierce discussion on the paintings ending in compromises for stylistic appreciations and promises for new ventures. Therefore, the rumblings of stylistic moorings of the Khallikote revivalist group used to emerge in the mango groves of Santiniketan and get lost in the hills of Khallikote, and to be precise, had a limited scale that oscillated between Rabi Narayan's quarters and Sarat Chandra Debo's apartments touching Ajit Keshari Ray's flat in between.

In the evenings inside the inner hostel Chandrasekhar and other friends would come out on the outer veranda to demonstrate the kinetic stances of their pictorial renderings in full costumes. This was a fantastic show where all the styles belonging to teachers and students would come up in their full analytical colour. You could see the Calcutta Academic School, Santiniketan Revivalistic School and emerging Orissan modern cubistic, surrealistic and expressionistic schools animated with the running commentary of their local authors. Such art performance sessions would end up with culinary services, spicy hot from Chandrasekhar's kitchen. Chandrasekhar is an expert culinary artist too. This was the kind of teaching environment in which Chandrasekhar spent four years in Khallikote School.

Chandrasekhar, after passing out from the Khallikote School of Art and Crafts had a brief start as an artist in the Government of India Census Operation

Worshippers, 35×76 cm

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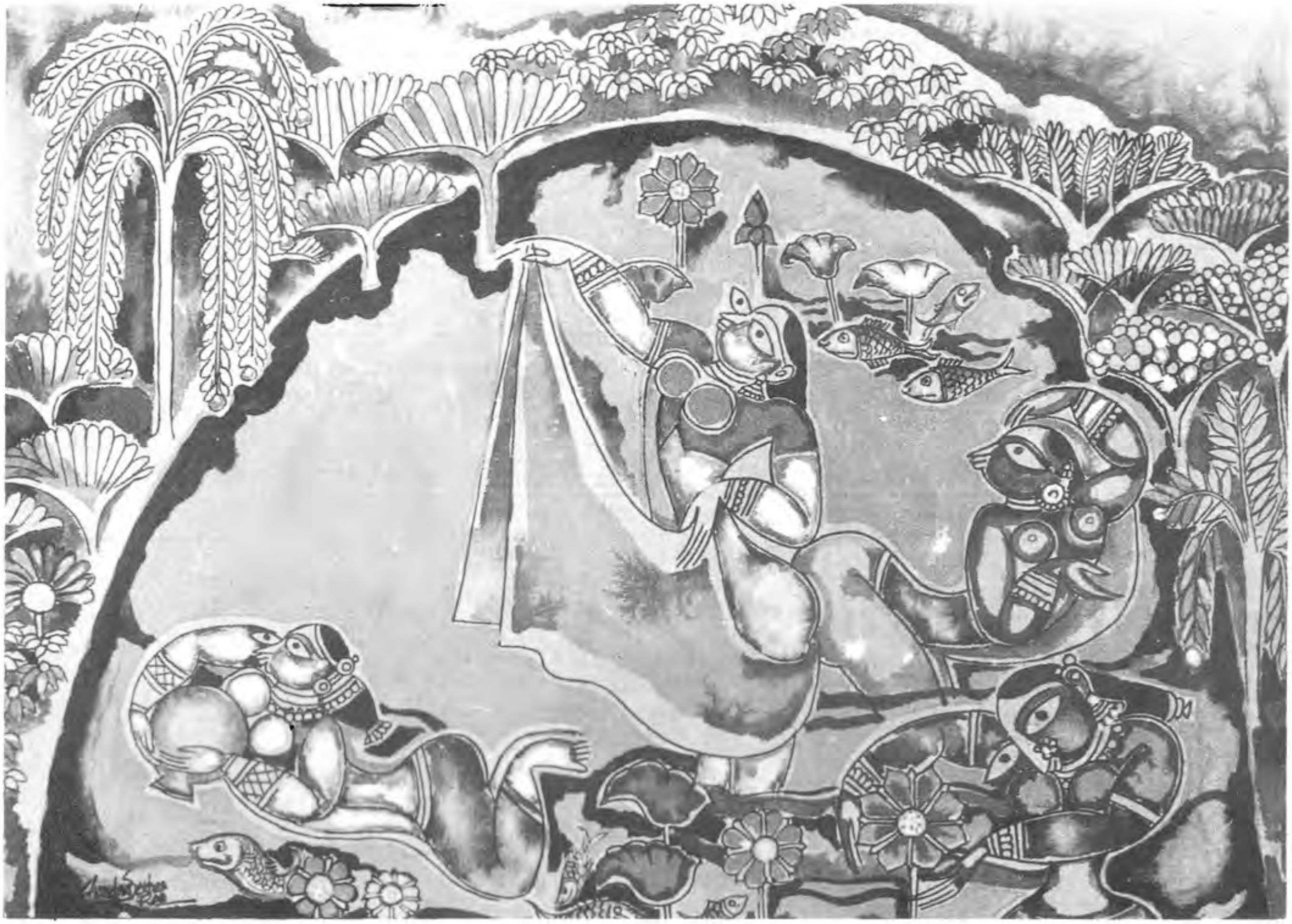

Village Pond, 30×45 cm

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Bureau at Cuttack sketching fashions and artifacts from field tours to tribal and rural areas. These sketches received admiration and the Department of Home Affairs, Government of India, awarded him. In the beginning of his career, this recognition gave him enough strength. He left this and after a short stay in the Bureau of Statistics and Economics went to Aska to join the Higher Secondary School of Science and Technology, a special kind of German-aided Industrial residential school as art teacher in the mid-sixties. At Aska, his family was quite large with five sisters and two brothers. But by the time he reached Aska his three sisters and a brother had unfortunately died young. Here Chandrasekhar's paintings have grown up in a feministic ambience imbibing the spirit, inspiration, dramatic stances and painterly sequences as well. But he has never been deterred and this seeming burden never created obstacles for him from proceeding further with his art. Rather the zeal for painting grew rapid, more and more temperas and washes and line drawings followed his style began showing symptoms of a change, a kind of nervousness to grow out of the style that has been a part of art then. It is here that Chandrasekhar first tasted the benefits of international contact. His German colleagues in the school came to know him and his paintings and made purchases to take home a few.

Chandrasekhar's personality unfolds when he was forced to get out of the family cocoon. The invisible compulsion that had dragged him to his family in Aska slowly got loosened and his artistic self rebelled, to acquire a wider opening forcing him to get out of his family. By then he had already married and had a child Geeta who later opted to become a painter like her father. Even his eldest son Tara is also struggling to emerge as a sculptor.

Chandrasekhar came to Bhubaneswar to join the State Handicrafts Design Center as a designer. Bhubaneswar was a different place with urban mentality and there were reasons for his mother and wife Bhagya to complain of bad quality milk, curd and vegetables. At Aska vegetables were indeed fresh and they had enough space to rear chicken for daily consumption of eggs. Soon the initial hesitation faded away and he was at his creative best in the mainstream of the contemporary movement. The Working Artists Association provided him with a solid base for cultivating the media and enlarging the area of influence. He was soon joined by D.N. Rao another young contemporary, sympathetic and faithful to his art problems. His erstwhile student Ramahari Jena also came to Bhubaneswar in the early eighties to take over the graphic studios of the Lalit Kala Akademi Regional Centre. His teachers Ajit Keshari and Anant Panda were also around. Now the circle was complete and he was cozy and comfortable. His paintings were showing promise and recognition trickled in. He started entertaining himself at this inevitable change.

It is not as though he was being introduced to Bhubaneswar situations for the first time. He had earlier stayed in Bhubaneswar while working for a short time in the Bureau of Statisties as an artist. We were living together in one of the sublet Government quarters in Unit IX. We had a mess. I was working in Orissa Secretariat, Planning and Coordination Department. That was a tense period for both of us, earning, painting and studying. We were studying in the B.J.B. Evening college. He was a regular member in Asim Basu's exhibition team. Whenever there were exhibition assignments, Chandrasekhar had to be summoned from Aska to work on large murals. His

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style that was genuinely suitable to large murals on the Orissa Pavilion had gained public appreciation. Although these were not entirely Orissan, they could easily fit into the required cultural repertoire of the government pavilion, few of these murals are now on display in the Orissa Secretariat. His visits to Delhi provided him with occasions to get in touch with displays in the National Gallery of Modern Art in Jaipur House and the Crafts Museum in Pragati Maidan and these had electrified his latent zeal for transformation to a new style.

In Bhubaneswar he was growing into a different personality, quite assertive in

Kaliya Dalana, 45×90 cm

his new style on tassar with splashing of colours, spontaneous, lucid and graceful. In Bhubaneswar we met frequently but were busy with our own assignments, he with his family, paintings and job at the Handicrafts quite peaceful but full of challenges and me with the Tourism Development Corporation doing painting, research and odd jobs like running hotels and motels and a fleet of cars as others could put it, no job of an artist.

I remember his association in the preparation for the International Exhibition of the Festival of India, which I was visualising Sweden and for USSR. That was a glorious occasion for me, him as well as for the contemporary art movement in Orissa. The theme of the exhibition was the popular art of India. Although he had handled large murals earlier, the idea of expansion and collective engagement of transferring the art motifs that were too real to make out an international art project successful, was a challenge for him. This exhibition made a forceful impact bringing together a variety of explicitly vanguard initiatives for depicting an Indian vision within a popular narrative format. The confidence thus generated and made Chandrasekhar much bolder to come up with splashing of colours rather than controlled application. The Festival of India assignment with its windows open to me a new world of visions shaped upon the idea of internationalism in the transformation of the ordinary into components of art.

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Dusk, 75×120 cm

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The memorable occasion at least for him was his solo exhibition in the *Chitra Baramasi* programme (exhibition round the year) of the Orissa Tourism Development Corporation in 1981. He had earlier held his first and second one man exhibitions in 1972 in Bhubaneswar under the sponsorship of the State Lalit Kala Akademi and Directorate of Industries, Berhampur respectively. These shows included his assorted works he had done as a student at Khallikote and his later paintings of Aska days. It was predominantly the revivalist work of the inner hostel style that continued with aberration in the growth of a pictorial culture. It gave an impression that he was searching for a vocabulary within the revivalist mode more contextual to the need of the time. *Chitra Baramasi* was a watershed in his art career to understand the change he accepted and cultivated. In this OTDC sponsored third solo the themes was on various aspects of *Krishnalila* – the blue god in different manifestations, all known compositions. What was striking in those works was a sense of liberalism pervading the paintings. The blue was changing from dull indigo to ultramarine, vermilion occupying more space and the yellow brightening to gold like the golden hue of Radha's body. Foliage was spread out wavy and billowy like in Orissan palm-leaf painting. Still no splashing of colour in abandon, but disciplined and shy. OTDC had published a black and white catalogue, multicoloured catalogues were distant dreams then, where in my introduction captured some memorable lines of mediaeval Oriya poets' Gopal Krishna, "Why have you got up so early," or Kavisurya Baladeva, "Why I fail to concentrate on", or Banamali, "Oh! Friend, come to my arbor". Chandrasekhar's paintings were the visualization of the literary images. The exhibition was a wonderful manifestation of the verbal and visual, pouring with poetic romanticism and visionary ideations. His paintings were always fascinating. His figures were slowly getting robust, witty and patterned. These paintings were vibrant with life as if they could be sung and danced out.

There is no dearth of awards and recognitions for him. He has been heaped with laurels. Almost every institution that matters in India awarded him, Academy of Fine Art, Calcutta; All India Fine Art and Crafts Society, New Delhi; Bombay Art Society, Mumbai; State Lalit Kala Akademi, Orissa and a number of other institutions.

Chandrasekhar Rao, like most of his contemporaries is a figurative painter. In fact whether it was traditional or modern, Orissa's gene rests in figure painting. His figures are earthy with cubic inclinations having Hussainic horse bullocks and Keytan (George Keyt) large bosoms with Jamini Roy's simplicity. His stances are derived from Odissi postures of temple sculptures, languorous, shy and full of desire. During the 1930's in India there had been attempts to synthesize cubism and Indian sculpture. Chandrasekhar Rao would hold his brush and start with verve from the forehead of his figure admitting a huge bulky stance at the formation of the breast line and then slope down with another curve like that of an earthen pitcher for the buttocks, quite fleshy and juicy sending waves of eros into the heart of the onlooker. His mood dance and sing with the form and his body quivers along with the flow of line. This is an Indian tradition to hold the line with *prana* and let it happen on the paper in its spontaneity and lucidity, the artist's hand just following the beats. It needs a mention that, this is his excellence in his painting that they are expressions of lyrical linearity driving a very subtle edge between

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tradition and modern. But in these dispositions there is a fear of lapsing into sentimental linear decoration.

Chandrasekhar's style is his own, like his signature. He has successfully borrowed from the western Indian painting, the elongated eye, the stances of dragging feet in the standing postures of Andhra Lepakshi murals and the Orissan overall disposition. He has in this the cubic concepts like the preoccupation with resolving the spatial tension between the concave and convex lines and the colour links. His pictorial style is the assimilation of spontaneity, sophistication and a synthesis of tradition and modern. The sweetness and the mannerism in his style have a tendency to develop into being the populist. His style is reflected in many of his junior contemporaries like Ganeswar Barik, Gourang Bariki, Rajiv Lochan Sahoo and in the works of many other students.

To understand the spontaneity and work ability of his style the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi proposed to him (the idea was mine and I was the secretary then) to open up a school, with him as the master painter transmitting the technicalities of his style to a larger group of students within the parameters of *Guru-Shishya* tradition. He agreed to the idea and in fact to ran a workshop for students for one and a half year. It was a kind of experiment even within the purview of modernism to assess the efficacy of a style as in a craft tradition, to allow it to be replicated and to grow.

Styles which become popular like Chandrasekhar's in the Orissan context is copied to the horror of the artist and to us as well. A modern hotel in Bhubaneswar has got his paintings copied, engaging young art college students to have them on the walls at a cheaper price. This could be 'kitsch', means to make cheap. When a work of art could be easily translated into easy money, a tendency arises to get them copied. This art phenomenon shares with folk and tribal art its "social quality" so that whatever is produced immediately finds its 'consumers', and both the creator and his public understand each other or rather the 'object'.

The begetter of such a tradition in contemporary India is Ravi Varma. But such a situation has not happened to Chandrasekhar. Perhaps we take things easy since it is a small place like Bhubaneswar. But for any serious creator it should send shock waves when the question of originality and bad taste is the issue. A statement somewhat similar in taste was given by the Secretary of the Orissa Lalit Kala Akademi in answer to my question why they were not printing my paintings but Rao's once disturbed me. This concerns me as well as my friend Chandrasekhar. The State Lalit Kala Akademi published picture postcards of most of the contemporary Oriya artists who could sell and not mine because the Akademi presumed nobody would buy cards with my paintings. Such ideas about art are to disturbing when we are forced to live with them.

Another factor of his works besides the technical virtuosity is the mystic quality of the pictures. Imbibed with Orissan tradition, literature and performing arts, the works have a spiritual and sensual quality, a complexity of innocence and the mystical. Yet his works are frank and direct with a feeling for the traditional without being really traditional. Chandrasekhar Rao's best attainment came when he participated in the 7th Triennale India (contemporary world art exhibition organized by Lalit Kala Akademi,

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New Delhi) with his *Quarto* a kind of installation with several dimensional view. He had used besides his normal colours, mirrors with painted surfaces to create a kind of illusory reflection when surfaces mutually coexisted. I was one of the Indian Commissioners and I watched how the viewers interacted with his *Quarto* with a touch of traditionality.

Chandrasekhar has moved with us, the WA group, with paintings for holding exhibitions of Orissan Contemporary art to Chennai, Mumbai, Chandigarh, Calcutta and Delhi. The train journeys in second class sleepers, sometimes in larger groups, and at other times small, consisting of Kashinath Jena, D.N. Rao, Ramahari Jena and I, carrying bundles of paintings on our heads on platforms like coolies, bribing ticket collectors inside compartments for overweight painting crates. The group exhibitions were pleasant when we could sell, depressing when we had to carry the entire lot back. When he got partial success from sales in group exhibitions, he intensified his solo exhibitions in Mumbai repeatedly in the 90s. For an artist his paintings are like his offspring and parting with them is always painful. But he has to, where the question of survival arises.

Chandrasekhar Rao is a versatile colourist, an exponent in linearity and an artist with an open mind to change and carry forward a tradition without being traditional. Chandrasekhar tried to vitalise the Designing Unit of the Handicraft Department when he was the designer. In Orissa, the sensitivity required to appreciate a new design is lacking and in the area of handicrafts it is only a new design that matters something great to save the handicraft production falling into a morbid trap of repetition. To add freshness to the existing repertoire, he prepared three large albums with his own designs running into thousands so that it could be followed in the workshops. He has visited several workshops to try out his designs. He worked sincerely to reorganize the Design Center with the limited resources. But with his transfer to the Handicraft Institute as Superintendent, the Design Center became inactive and was later closed.

When he was the Superintendent of the Handicraft Institute, he brought invisible changes to emphasize the craft learning process. He introduced teaching of theory and craft's history to make his student's more informative. I remember I had delivered a few lectures and watched with admiration the students interactive abilities. He took his students on study tours to places of archaeological importance, to museums and craft centres in and outside the state. Such tours opened up students' vision of the world of crafts. Various new perspectives were added to the teaching programme. It is the characteristic of Chandrasekhar that wherever he goes, he creates an amicable atmosphere to live in.

As Chairman of the Working Artists Association he remains ever concerned. Would anybody believe that the state Lalit Kala Akademi never asked for a representation (barring perhaps once in all these years) from this organization? With whatever financial assistance from the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, which has granted recognition to the Association, it mostly functions with personal donation of members and commissions from sales proceeds of the group exhibitions. Chandrasekhar is always committed to the activities of the association and the group. His face lights up when he has to introduce his association to the public and read the long list of achievements.

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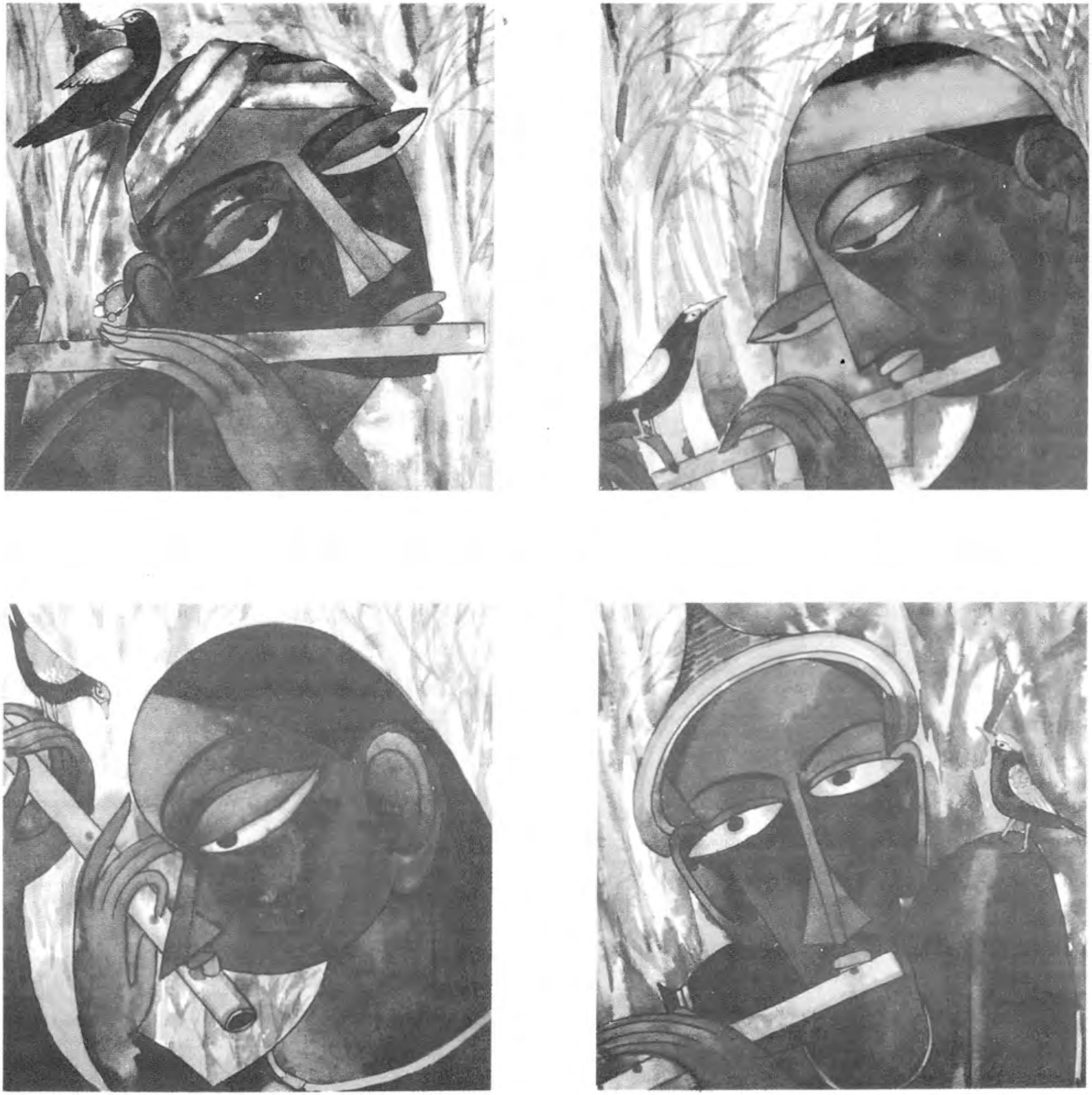

Melody. 28×30 cm (each)

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I am delighted that the Working Artists Association of which he is the Chairman has thought of this multi-coloured monograph to mark his 60th birth anniversary. This is an important gesture on the part of the artist community. This is a tradition, I would like to emphasize, the Working Artists Association wants to set in motion in Orissa for its Chairman, not because he happens to be the Chairman but it is meant for an artist who eminently deserves it. I feel privileged to write an introduction and I am particularly happy that they have chosen to print on the cover a picture that was selected for publication in the series of reproduction of Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi but was held up after I left the Akademi.

I would fondly wish the present edition of the monograph to be revised and enlarged when he would be completing seventy. I am aware that many more achievements of the artist would be added then to update facts. But two important things are to be included at least to make the artist more happy and at home. First, about his art school for children, which emphasises on the child's creativity through instinct and behaviour, probably his multimedia son Giri taking the reins of the school and the second, his sagging mustache that is likely to grow into enormous proportion with constant care to maintain them young like his uncle Chelpati Rao. That would be in the right aristocratic spirit of a Telugu Dora *(Zamindar)* once they were.

Dinanath Pathy

N. Chandrasekhar Rao, Gogostha, Ink on Colour

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Two ladies with a parrot, 45 x 50 cm

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Flowering of a Visual Signature

Chandrasekhar's body works stretching from his Khallikote days in the sixties till close of the century gives a fair idea of an evolution of painting style. Making a beginning in the restricted ambience of the revivalists, it slowly drifts away into a highly personalised style, the artist could rightfully claim as his. Although he was a student in Indian Painting branch, he did not like to understand the 'Indianness' as his teachers and his colleagues accepted. For him 'Indianness' was not the slavish imitation of the Bengal school style but a contextualisation of a phenomenon in the time and space of Orissa. To understand this and to come out of the initial hesitations, he took all these years in the search for a personal vocabulary.

Khallikote in the sixties threw up two kinds of symptoms even within the revivalist fold. Picking up the very interesting nomenclatures his friend Dinanath has devised as the outer hostel and inner hostel style we would like to include Chandrasekhar in the inner hostel group that revolted against the other and marked a departure. Even in the group Chandrasekhar is credited to have travelled a long distance incorporating changes into his style and making attempts to make new approach to the kind of 'Indianness' he had perhaps envisaged. His style even after accepting a lot of traits from pata paintings and palm-leaf drawings does not confine itself rather accept motifs and mannerism from other traditional and modern paintings.

Before getting into the discussion on individual works, I would like to visualise them broadly in four phases: the first phase (1960-70), the process of learning a style, second phase (1970-80), opening up, third phase (1980-90), consolidation, and the fourth phase (1990-2000), the flowering of a style.

In the first phase, the paintings are only temperas on Nepali and Chinese paper and wash on whatman paper with use of opaque powder colour and transparent Winsor & Newton colour. The subjects are epical, historical and rural, drawn from everyday life experience, women in different moods, bazaar scenes, ladies in their makeups and doing their domestic rounds etc. Some of his important paintings of this phase are, *Prasravana Saile, Refugee, Meera Vishapana* and *Abhisarika*. The colours used at this stage were limited and subdued, the mixture of ochre, grey, terra verde, red ochre, white with dreamy shades, mystery and mystic. The colours are set into controlled thin borderlines and figures, vegetation and houses. Soon with the devoid of force, the figures presented as if in a theatre. This attempt to suggest the contours with application of an inner line with a shaded tint is visible.

His wash paintings of the student days reflect a tender softness in colour application. Therefore, the mistiness created by him allowed a lot of space for the forms to move about in his composition. *Abhisarika*, one of his wash paintings carries the mood of the lady moving in disguise out of her house in a stormy night with a lamp in her hand. She tries to save the flame from the unruly wind. It feels as if the artist has tried

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to capture the moment for the viewer to examine its trueness. Capturing the image in a realistic manner Chandrasekhar plays with the light and dark. He has painted obstinately during his school life. The tempera like *Refugee,* is a true example of inner hostel type. A family is shown in the process of shifting. This mundane subject a documentation of rural life, where poor people in need of food and shelter keep shifting places. Chandrasekhar selects subjects with a touch of melancholy, for it allows a liberty to use sombre colour and realistic rendering. Since transportation facilities were inadequate, a donkey is shown carrying the luggage. The subtlety of line marks an impression in the painting. Subdued and restricted colours, soft shades and convenient outlines certainly fit in with the mood of the composition.

In the phase of opening up, Chandrasekhar gives up the Khallikote style painting in favour of a fold rendering. The temperas of the first phase, by then fade away and an approach to bolder lines and articulating figures introduced as replacements. The figures become more dramatic and ground is treated diferently. There was a constant experimentation going on to try out all possible method to open up from the conventional. In this process, the carrier of the painting changes to cloth of various textures with the colour becoming pure and direct. Chandra10sekhar painted many mythological subjects in this phase, to name, *Krishna Yashoda, Durga, Jugal* and *Putana Badha.* His subjects' varieties also cover genre scenes like, *Family, Rest, Sringar* and so on. Sringar, one of his most liked subject, reveals a lady sitting on the bench and combing her hair. The figure has simplified rendering with colour filled up evenly all through. With line turning into a clear demarcation of the simplification, the signature of Chadrasekhar's painting has started making a mark. Wide-open eyes, emphatic lines, deviations from the conventional revivalist school and the composition tightly hug the figure in the picture frame. This has worked as evidence to the changing style. Chandrasekhar essentially emphasised on line, colour, form and compositional scheme. He was constant by to fuse freshness in his paintings. He found tradition, to which he was deeply entrenched, as a veritable source to stimulate his imagination while being alive to the contemporary situation. His association with the South Orissan villages itself draws the thematic inspiration from the cultural milieu that grew around.

The phase of consolidation creates a total effect in the paintings. In this phase his spectrum of subject widened and social themes came almost parallel to the mythical scenes. The paintings can be further divided into two parts, early and late eighties. In the paintings executed in the early period, the importance given to line is identifiable in the space between the outer line and the colour filling up in the figures. This kind of colour application is to bring in more air into the spatial construction. Slowly few noticeable changes occurred through colour application. The background was treated with tea stain and colour spilling so as to project the figures. With him we notice the experimental use of tea stain like the pahari painters use cowurine with delicacy and refinement. This treatment resulted in extraordinary textural effect with the support of cotton texture. The next development was with multiple colour splashes in the figures as well as in the ground.

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The Flute, 54×72 cm

Superimposition of different colours from a deft hand and careful execution creates a special effect. The deeper paint is spread from the outlines in single strokes to get the luminous delicacy. The figure and the background get mixed with subtle colour shades in a binding. Lines become rapid and often casual. Certain forms, stances and poses develop a mature rendering. The social paintings in this phase are, *Dawn, Dusk, Village Pond, Village Life, Tree Worship, Shringar, Meghdoota, Card Player, Musicians, Procession, Village Deity, Bird Seller, Fisher Woman, Rest, Toilet, and mythic subjects are, Gita Govinda, Siva Vishapana, Kaliyadalana, Krishnalila, Nari Gunjara, Kama Gunjara, Dehi Pada Pallava, Eternal Sleep, Ravana Shaking Mount Kailash* and many more. These paintings methodically and consciously show a kind of distortion that dynamically suit the figures. In this phase one finds paintings like, *Dusk* and *Dawn,* where figures multiply in the composition. In the daily routine of any Orissan village, the cows are taken out to the fields for gazing every morning and evening. Chandrasekhar captures these scenes in their different dispposition.

Chandrasekhar must have painted around a dozen variations of these paintings on this particular theme and every time he paints, with the changing time and experience, the lines are converted to maximum elasticity that are stretched from one end to the other so as to simplify the composition. He draws the cattle with

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Blue God, 35×56 cm

Delhi Pada Pallava, 35×56 cm

their various moods. Chandrasekhar paints the inference of the morning and evening so that one can sense the stumping tows of cows and dust raised thereby from the ground as well. He arranges them in such a way that the multiplication and overlapping become a designed format quite meaningful to understand the wealth of cattle. One could sense in these paintings a feeling of the rural and the primitive, of flesh and vigour, of tenderness and love.

In the painting *Eternal Sleep*, Vishnu is seen from the top with Lakshmi and Ananta, the seven-hooded

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snake along with other figures, executed in proper perspective. The very approach reminds us of the naïveté of folk art, fused with the present thought to create an illusion of space. The compositional strength is revealed by the interesting motif that emerges to the vision from different locales in the picture. He fashionably interweaves the elements and forms in the composition.

Village Deity reflects a village environment in which the women worship the village deity. The figures are in a casual atmosphere charged with devotion and ritual, worshipping the goddess made of terracotta. There are drummers and other figures carrying pitchers on their head. Two goats are tied to a tree behind the drummer waiting to be sacrificed. Chandrasekhar has always been subtle in the selection of subjects that have greater relevance to the present.

The fourth phase marks his growing confidence. Most of his paintings could be counted like *Cowherd, Moon Worship, Village Deity Bathing Ghats, Nayika with Parrot, Krishna and Radha* in various moods. These paintings are carefree renderings of form and line interspersed with colour washes. His painting gets appreciated and sold, tempting the artist to recreate more of them. Of many themes, a few prominent ones are *Jayadeva's Gita Govinda, Dasavatara, Kalidasa's Meghdoota, a and the Quarto.*

He has consistently worked to discover his own personal style. *Gita Govinda* is a passionate theme in Indian painting and many painters have dealt with it differently. Belonging to Orissa, Chandrasekhar has to his advantage, the place where Jayadeva once lived and composed his immortal poem. This has helped him to follow the poetry of the blue god closely through his visual translation, bringing the melodrama to a halt for sometime and redefining the joyous moments of eroticism and intimacy with colour and space. Each painting reveals his manifestation of elements, the *tamala kunja*, dark clouds, union and separation, emotion, concept of love that is fused cleverly into the subject so as to make it more appropriate and convincing. A certain degree of narration is also visible in the paintings, enhancing the visual quality as well as referring to the great tradition of Indian painting. Thus it allows the viewer to be equally involved and feel the spirit of the painting.

Dehi Pada Pallava of the *Gita Govinda* shows Radha in a pensive mood and Krishna trying to convince her the reason for his late arrival to arouse her. Here the confidence of the artist gets overwhelming and the treatment is absolute fancy. In various other editions, Radha is shown waiting on the bank of Yamuna, where all the elements are treated symbolically. The simplification of the figures as well as the atmosphere reaches a new height. The kunja and the river are accommodated in a typical decorative pattern and the figure of Radha is highly stylised. There is a feel of receding space near Yamuna and the fishes that are supposed to be inside the water are clearly visible showing the artist's affiliation to the traditional school. His latest painting *Blue God* is a typical rendering where he has depicted Krishna, the blue god in solitude. This is an example where he tries to change the foliage ambience to an architectural setup with a departure from the methodical approach to his old colour scheme of subdued shades. The trees appear differently to the previous renderings of Chandrasekhar.

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Bathing Ghat, 60×120 cm

Lonely, 60×120 cm

In the Bathing Ghat, the female figures in various bathing postures are painted, sometimes catching fish and often sun drying their hair or sari in a traditional style which is a regular subject of the Orissan villages. Rao's bathers do not acknowledge the viewers' presence. They are essentially representations of power

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and movement more than sensual beauty and they exist not because of us but in spite of us. *Bathing Ghat* and *Village Pond* are titles given to almost two similar kinds of subjects. He has understood the female figures no less than nature. He feels the delicacy of the bodily structure and the expressiveness of their limbs. Every gesture is rhythmic, full of reverberation and equally easy to interpret. Perhaps this is the reason why he has used the figures as sensitive messengers to his visual creation and simultaneously meets the aesthetic requirements as a medium.

The *Quarto* marks the transition from consolidation to reaffirmation of a personal style in the Seventh India International Triennale. This had four paintings with mirrors facing each of them designed to involve the viewer for interaction. The subject of his painting reflected the women in playful youth engaged in various activities of the day, all four put in sequence. Beginning with the Bathing Ghat follwed by Sringar and worship in the temple and finaly occupied in the domestic work. These four eposodes of the subject are reflected with subtle twist in their posture and sensitivety for love. The female figures here are little elongated to meet the compositional scheme keeping in view the personalised stylistic approach. This brought him a lot of accolades in the exhibition and recognition as an Oriya artist.

The current series of paintings deal with varieties of faces both male and female. It speaks of his new style that also creates an aura of individual characters. Extraordinary exaggeration and subdued colours create typical faces that accomplish different attitudes. The faces are expressive with a soft tonal background full of trees that is rendered in a symbolic format.

Chandrasekhar is someone who seems to have not only grasped the somewhat elusive content of the great tradition of Indian art but also developed an amazing proficiency to express it in suitable amazing graphic representations. Using fish shaped eyes, bulbous breasts in their unyielding fullness, bounteous buttocks and faces drawn into bird like visages, he has created a staggering variety of forms and shapes, which while maintaining their roots with the tradition, extend with their lithe grace of a rapidly growing exotic plant. Chandrasekhar charges his distorted figures with his characteristic stamp to make them lively and his own.

The line is the force of Chandrasekhar's painting, the line that flows beautifully, remarkably precise and steady. Chandrasekhar is popular for his synthetic style-blending in today's contemporary situation and thus shaping his visual signature. His stylisation is something primeval and archaic. The synthesis speaks of his mastery. In his paintings one can see the brush strokes, colour textures and sense the emotion of the artist. The expression in his paintings is naive and pure.

Chandrasekhar has now entered a new phase where art becomes the philosophy of life, being within the ambit of craftsmanship and being above it as a contemporary artist. He always lives and enjoys living in his art.

Pradosh Mishra

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Banashree

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N Chandrasekhar Rao

Born	16th September 1940, Polasara, Ganjam, Orissa
Education	Govt. Diploma in Fine Art and Crafts, Khallikote, Orissa.

Awards

1962	Govt. of India, Home Affairs, New Delhi
1961,79,88,93	State Lalit Kala Akademi, Orissa
1972,91	Prajatantra Prachar Samiti, Cuttack
1986	Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta
1988	All Inida Fine Art and Crafts Society, New Delhi
1989	Bombay Art Society, Bombay
1990	South Central Zone Cultural Centre, Nagpur
2000	Honoured with Setpe Samvardhana by Gurukala Ashram,
2000	Honoured with Nandighosh award by B.K. College of Art & Crafts.
2000	Conferred with Kala Bibhushana by Working Artists Association of Orissa, Bhubaneswar

One Man Shows

1972	State Lalit Kala Akademi, Orissa, Bhubaneswar
1972	Directorate of Industries, Berhampur
1981	Orissa Tourism Development Corporation, Bhubaneswer
1985	State Lalit Kala Akademi, Orissa, Bhubaneswar
1989	Hotel Kalinga Ashoka, Bhubaneswar
1990	Hotel Oberoi, Bhubaneswar
1992	San Diego, USA
1993	Museum of Fine Arts, Chandigarh
1994	Rashtriya Lalit Kala Kendra, Bhubaneswar
1997	Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
1997	Bajaj Art Gallery, Mumbai
1998	Crimson Art Gallery, Bangalore
2000	Retrospective RLKK, Bhubaneswar

Participations

1961 98	State Lalit Kala Akademi of Orissa, Bhubaneswar
1969 2000	Working Artists Association of Orissa (WA) Bhubaneswar
1970 95	Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta
1982 97	National Art Exhibition, New Delhi
1982 98	Rashtriya Kala Mela, New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Calcutta, Bangalore
1987	Chandigarh Lalit Kala Akademi, Chandigarh
1987,88,89,92	All India Fine Art and Crafts Society, New Delhi
1989,95,99	Bombay Art Society, Bombay
1990,91,94,99	South Central Zone Cultural Centre, Nagpur
1991	Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Calcutta Fine Art Akademi, Rajasthan
1991	Kala Kumbh, New Delhi & Ahmedabad
1991	7th International Triennale India, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi,
1992	Working Artists Association of Orissa, Rabindra Bhavan Galleries, New Delhi
1993	'Art Trends' by Nag foundation, Pune
1993	Citi Bank, Mumbai;
1994	'Oddiyan' Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai; 'Avantika', New Delhi; Orissa Festival New Jersey, USA; NS Bendre Memorial All India Exhibition, Jammu, New Delhi, Chandigarh
1995	Rabindra Bhavan Galleries, New Delhi
1996	'Spring is not over', Chandigarh
1996	'Manifestation Visual & Verbal', Rabindra Bhavan Galleries, New Delhi
1997	'Oddiyan' Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai
1998	ABC Gallery, Varanasi
1999	Orissan Contemporary Art, Sun-Et-Lumiere, Mumbai

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Seminars & Camps

1981, 90 National Artists' Camp organised by Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
1981, 86 Seminar on Pata paintings, Orissa
1982 Seminar on Filigree, Orissa
1982 Seminar on Wood Carving and Applique, Orissa
All Orissa Artists Seminar, Berhampur
1985 Art Teachers' Camp by NCERT, New Delhi
at B.K. College of Art and Crafts, Bhubaneswar
1988 National Seminar on Art and Artists of Orissa, WA, Orissa
1988 State Seminar on Art Education in Orissa, WA, Orissa
1989 All India Artists' Camp Oraganised by State Lalit Kala Akademi at Raurkela, Orissa
1990 National Seminar at Bhubaneswar on 'Primitive; Vigour'organised by Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi; National Seminar on Crafts by Crafts Council of Orissa, Bhubaneswar
1991 National Painters' Camp by Nag Foundation, Pune
1991 Convenor, National Artists' Camp organised by Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi at RLKK, Bhubaneswar
1992 State Level Artists, Camp by NALCO, Orissa
1997 National Artists, Camp on 50 years of Indian Independence, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar

Credits

1981, 83, 90 Jury for All Orissa Child Art Competition by State Lalit Kala Akademi, Orissa
1989, 91 Jury for All India Child Art Competition by Sunanda forPathy Foundation, Orissa
1993 Jury for All Orissa Chita Competition by State Lalit Kala Akademi, Orissa
1994 Jury for Research Award Scholarship (National) by Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
1995 Jury for State Lalit Kala Akademi Award, Orissa
1995 General Council Member & Member for Grants Committee, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi Jury for State Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi; Member, Advisory Committee, Rashtriya Lalit Kala Kendra, Bhubaneswar
1995 Jury member for National, other than National and Kala Mela Committee, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.
1996 Jury for National Kala Mela at Banglore by Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi

Murals

Prepared murals for Orissa Pavilion at India International Trade Fair, New Delhi; Festival of Popular Art of India in Sweden; Agriculture Fair, Nagpur; Orissa Fair, Ahmedabad; Orissa State Museum, Soochana Bhawan, and Orissa Secretaria, Bhubaneswar

Collection

Rashtriya Lalit Kala Kendra, Bhubaneswar & Calcutta; National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi; Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi; Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta; Nag Foundation, Pune; Museum of Fine Arts, Chandigarh; Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar; GS Shenoy Memorial Trust, Bangalore; State Lalit Kala Akademi, Orissa; Orissa Tourism Development Corporation, Bhubaneswar; NALCO, Orissa & Calcutta; Orissa Mining Corporation, Bhubaneswar; Marico Industries, Mumbai; Hotel Oberoi, Mumbai

Work Experience

1967-81 Art Teacher in Higher Secondary School of Science and Technology, Aska
1981-91 Handicrafts Designer in State Handicrafts Design Centre, Orissa, Bhubaneswar
1991-98 Superintendent in State Institute of Handicrafts Training, Orissa, Bhubaneswar
1994-96 Guru for Institute of Tradintional Art, set up by Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
1987 Founder Director, Creative School of Art, Bhubaneswar
1988 Chairman, Working Artists Association (WA), of Orissa, Bhubaneswar
1998 Deputy Manager in Handicrafts and Cottage Industries, Orissa,Bhubaneswar

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Dr. Dinanath Pathy is a practising contemporary painter, art historian, creative writer and research collaborator of Dr. Eberhard Fischer, Zurich; presently works as Director, Alice Boner Institute, Varanasi.

Pradosh Mishra has studied Art History in Orissa and Chandigarh. Presently works as Lecturer in the Department of History of Art, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

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